

# EVALUATING ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN THREE DIFFERENT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS FOR GRADE X: A CASE STUDY IN SCHOOL A, SCHOOL B, SCHOOL C TANGERANG

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**Abstract:** Evaluation on English textbooks at present is not popular though it is crucial and as a part of continuous improvement in the teaching and learning of English. Research needed to describe and discuss textbook evaluation and one evaluation done on three English textbooks used in three different senior high schools grade X located in Tangerang. The evaluation is on the textbooks' strengths, weaknesses, and feedback from users, the English teachers and students. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are applied to gather data from the English teachers and students of grade X. The results show there are similarities such as all the textbooks do not have teacher's guide. The strengths mainly are the textbook has a CD, has various exercises and vocabularies activities, and has good and tidy organization. Constructive suggestions from the users are also presented in order to advance the textbook quality in the future and as a basis for school principals and English coordinators to determine future English textbooks usage.

**Keywords:** *English textbook evaluation, its strengths, grade X senior high*

## Introduction

The students need textbooks as guidance in learning as textbooks play an important role in a teaching-learning process (Mohammad & Kumari, 2007). However, there are some problems regarding to English textbooks in Indonesia. The high price may lead to several effects; first is that the students cannot afford which make them borrow from the school or library if any; second is because borrowing from the school, they cannot bring the textbook home and has to be placed in the school. The change of the textbook also matters that the next student's batch cannot borrow from the seniors. Another problem is in the distribution of the textbook. Sometimes it takes a long time to get the textbook from the publisher or bookstore especially the textbook published outside Indonesia. Then, the content is not suitable for the students which sometimes the school chooses ESL textbook while in Indonesia it should use the EFL one. There is also a problem about the content and the pictures appeared in a textbook which are not suitable for the students. In addition, in current years the English Language Teaching materials become constantly developing for commercial objectives seeing from many learning environments at moment (Dawn, 2007).

Therefore, there is a need to conduct further research about English textbooks since by exploring textbooks, the teachers and the schools can identify the good English textbook that is more suitable to be used in teaching English as foreign language, specifically for the first grade of senior high school in Indonesia

## Textbooks and Its Evaluation

When the textbook is going to be chosen and evaluated, the textbook must match with the curriculum, the students, and the teachers Byrd (2001). To match with the curriculum, the publisher must adjust with the curriculum that the government set for each grade. It is based on the learners' needs and goals that want to be achieved. The textbook is expected to fulfill the learners' needs, also to support the curriculum. It is better when the publisher can attach manuals and CDs for teacher. Besides matching with the curriculum, the publisher should know what the teachers' and the learners' needs so that they will be better users of the textbook and they can get the important skills to be used in teaching and learning process appropriately (Leung & Andrews, 2012).

It is a fact that textbooks are made for the students and they must contain not only the language skills in the curriculum but also fulfill the students' needs as English learners. There are four aspects to analyze whether a textbook is suitable for the students according to Byrd:

- a) the content, whether the textbook is interesting, well-explained, appropriate, and help the students to understand what they need to learn;
- b) the examples should be suitable for the students' interests and lives and relate with the material that is explained;
- c) the exercise should meet the students' needs and again interesting for the students;
- d) the format where the layout and design aspects should be applicable and fit with the students' age and level, easy to read, also must have appendices and index, all about the format and the presentation of the textbook itself.

There are seventeen criteria for evaluating textbooks according to Sheldon (1988). In addition, there are twelve criteria of evaluating a textbook according to Brown (2001). According to Crawford (2005), there are eight points about competent ELT materials. In the book 'Teach Yourself: Teaching English as a Foreign Language', Riddel (2007) pointed out several criteria of a good textbook. First, the author should be experienced teachers and suitable for the expected level. Then, the content should fit with the countries that use it which has familiar material with the learner's mind. The learner will adapt fast when the content is something that they experience in their own country. Moreover, the textbook has to be fit not only with the teacher's level, but also the student's level. It also has to be interesting, pleasant, well-designed, and easy-followed. It is better to have the easy level at the beginning and close with the harder one. In this book, he also states that expert teachers often say that the students are bored with the standards topics such as weather, food, holidays, and countries. In fact, they are safe, easy, relevant, useful topics for beginner. For the advance level, they are expected to learn more specific and challenging topic and issue such as technology. Lastly, Riddel states that a good textbook should have various and balance skills and language activities, pronunciation, review sections, and grammar summaries.

### Research Setting and Subjects

In this study, the researcher used theory or concept sampling from purposeful sampling to choose the teachers and simple random sampling from probability sampling to choose the students (Creswell, 2008). The detail of the subjects can be seen on the table below

	School A	School B	School C	Total
<b>Teachers</b>	1	2	1	4
<b>Teachers' Name</b>	TW	EEG and VT	TW	-
<b>Total Students</b>	43	337	49	429
<b>Sampling Students</b>	21	55	23	99

The detail of the textbooks can be seen on the table below

	School A	School B	School C
<b>Name</b>	Advanced Learning English 1	Get Along with English	Real English
<b>Publisher</b>	Facil	Erlangga	ESIS
<b>Author(s)</b>	Herman Benyamin, Sofijandi, Sutarli Zain, Agus Kusmawan, Ida Yusridawati Yakoub	Entin Sutinah, Iis Nurhayani, N. Euis Kartini, Heri Mulyana, Nur Asyiah, Rachma F. Kesuma, Eka Mulya Astuti	Peter James
<b>Year</b>	2010	2010	2008
<b>Page number</b>	210 pages	162 pages	214 pages
<b>Price</b>	64,000 Rupiah	41,000 Rupiah	97,000 Rupiah
<b>Who chose it</b>	Principal (Mrs. S)	English Teachers discussion guided by Mrs. D	School Foundation (YK)

### Findings on Physical Aspects

Below is the result from the students' questionnaire about physical aspects

No	Questions	Advanced Learning English 1		Get Along with English		Real English	
1	The textbook is heavy	NO 52.38%	YES 47.62%	NO 87.27%	YES 12.73%	NO 69.57%	YES 30.43%
2	The images/ pictures are up-to-date	NO 4.76%	YES 95.24%	NO 32.73%	YES 67.27%	NO 95.65%	YES 4.35%
3	The illustrations are meaningful	NO 4.76%	YES 95.24%	NO 29.9%	YES 70.91%	NO 73.91%	YES 26.09%
4	The textbook price is expensive	YES 100%		NO 60.82%	YES 39.18%	NO 26.09%	YES 73.91%

## Findings on Contents

Below is the result from the students' questionnaire about contents

No	Questions	Advanced Learning English 1		Get Along with English		Real English	
1	The textbook use authentic material	NO 23.81%	YES 76.19%	NO 43.64%	YES 56.36%	NO 34.78%	YES 65.22%
2	The material is difficult to understand	NO 80.95%	YES 19.05%	NO 60%	YES 40%	NO 86.96%	YES 13.04%
3	The contents can be applied in daily life/practical	NO 28.57%	YES 71.43%	NO 38.18%	YES 61.82%	NO 13.04%	YES 86.96%

For the authenticity, more than 50% students in school A, B and C agreed that the textbooks used authentic material. In 'Advanced Learning English 1', the sources were stated at the end, some were authentic but there were two texts written by Indonesian. There were also articles about Indonesia and it was not clear whether it was from authentic source or not since the authors were Indonesian. Below are comments from the English teachers

### School A Teacher

I think the material is authentic because the sources are already cited at the bottom of the text.

### School B Teachers

Teacher A: Yeah, the sources are very real. If the question is typed, the book always writes the sources.

Teacher B: I think it's about realistic ya. Because some texts are adapted from aa the real source and then what happens in the recent time. So it's relevant.

### School C Teacher

The texts are not followed by the source. So I don't know if the texts are authentic or not.

Ya, the sources are not cited in the book.

## Findings on Skills

Below is the result from the students' questionnaire about skills

No	Questions	Advanced Learning English 1	Get Along with English	Real English
1	The textbook helps you to develop your writing skills	YES 85.71%	YES 92.73%	YES 78.26%
2	The textbook helps you to develop your speaking skills	YES 90.48%	YES 94.55%	YES 78.26%
3	The textbook helps you to develop your reading skills	YES 95.24%	YES 89.09%	<b>YES 100%</b>
4	The textbook helps you to develop your listening skills	YES 76.19%	YES 65.45%	YES 82.61%

## Conclusion

In conclusion, 'Advanced Learning English1' textbook used in School A had strength that it was completed by a CD to help teacher to teach listening and reading. However, there were some articles made by Indonesian author which made the textbook not fully authentic for the texts. The teacher thought that the textbook was expensive, but worth the content. Even the textbook had too many colors and pictures but still appropriate for the students. The students also liked the content yet they say the price should have been cheaper.

'Get Along with English' textbook used in School B contained general facts, or general knowledge which was good for the students. There were also exercises from the national exam which could help the students to be adapted with national exam questions but this textbook had the least colors among all. From several textbooks, the teachers chose this textbook to be the best one; cheap but contains good material for the students.

'Real English' used in School C had good organization and tidy. Compared to others, the exercises were more various for each chapter. The teacher also liked the textbook. However, it lacked of speaking and listening activities. Most of the exercises were reading comprehensions and vocabularies. The textbook had the

highest price among all and it could be considered expensive. In addition, the students said that they did not like the pictures.

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